

LOVE POEMS

REGINALD C. ROBBINS



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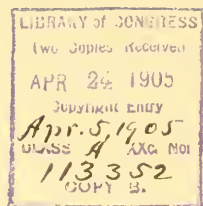


LOVE POEMS

REGINALD C. ROBBINS



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AN ANNUAL CYCLE

AN ANNUAL CYCLE

1

SWEET, if these Songs of Sorrow in thy soul
Mean a new music to a grief long dumb,
Take them for utterance and speak them forth
Transfigured by the passion of thy love !
Sweet, what re-birth ! if so this verse that halts
Complaining from a tongue whose only strength
Is that it echoeth some sense of thee —
Such shadow flame forth in the substance of
Thy spirit's very power of life and light !
Then were the service splendid ; then, the voice
Full choir of glory ; and the song at last
Heav'n-sent, heav'n-searching : thou, in truth, its
God ! —

3

LOVE POEMS

II

LOVE, if this verse fail of acceptance in
Thy spirit's tragedy, yea, miss a life
Loftily thus ennobled in thy speech,
Dream it not dead, still-born out of a blank
And barren volubility. But read
An heart-real cry, a soul-necessity
Of self-relief — it will not harm thee so
And may save me from madness.

There are hours,
Belovèd, when the agony finds act
In sound which owes no tongue articulate :
Groanings and spasms of the shrinking frame
Unhuman, brute-like. Wilt thou blame a song?

AN ANNUAL CYCLE

III

MORN after morn unto these anxious eyes
Brings expectation ; eve on eve descending
Withdraweth opportunity : the day
Done, and hope wasted : and the heart of hope
Turn'd inward, wasting with the waste of days.

When was the world worn vacant ? when, the
 worth,

Wonder and beauty of all ways of work
Made mockery : and daylight, a despair ?
I have known strength and sunlight in myself
Of the new day : no mockery. But now
Even sorrow stales ; and only desolateness
Remains : and emptiness of any aim.

LOVE POEMS

IV

AND yet, 't were blasphemy! Lo, thou remainest ;
Thou : and the thought of thee. And all my world
Is wonderful, sacred because thy shrine. —
There *is* a faith, a worship without end,
A work and worth of work which meaneth thee!

Such is my privilege, to love thee now
In every effort : every hour of earth
Directed toward and still attaining thee.
Thou art not secret from this world of thee,
Strange from my world which is so wholly thine ;
Which bends all energies and every aim
To one aim : as thou knowest ; and shalt know !

AN ANNUAL CYCLE

V

I HAD not thought to have told thee. But some strength
Impell'd me to the utterance, to bear
The supreme splendor of the truth and thee.
I had had vision of a vast, sweet peace
In marvelous community with thee ;
A life of strenuous labor wherein all
Of heart and strength and soul were centred in
Thy soul and strength and heart unioning all
Earth and the things even beyond all earth —
Made mine and thine and birthright of earth all.

I had my splendid secret with the rest. —
Can such truth truly be ; and cease to be ?

LOVE POEMS

VI

I, WHO have dwelt (for thou didst find me so)
In souls of most men else, did I forget
Sudden the proxihood : and learn mine own ?
I, was I strong to sense the personal lives
Of brains and hearts not mine ; yet was so weak
As to desire a life of brain and heart
For mine : nor feel it in the lives of these ?
Ought I but love their loves, call those mine own ;
Leave thee to read and smile and nod approval ;
Nor tell mine own tale — brain, heart, hope : and hell ?

'T were somewhat, to be crazed of an own grief,
Ay ; and be ashen of a burning wish !

AN ANNUAL CYCLE

VII

I PLEAD not, urge not. Only ; if thy soul
Setteth toward sacrifice, would save a world
By any martyrdom, I point a way
Plain to an uttermost accomplishment.
If thou wouldst enter in and be at peace
Anywhere, anywise : do thou but bid me
Swift to thy hand, encompassing about
Thy footstep, ordering an universe
To be thy benison : me, strong to serve
Only by virtue of thy saving need !

I plead but for the chance that thou wilt plead. —
How would I save thee : praising any pain !

LOVE POEMS

VIII

'T IS thus it hurts — not wholly for mine own :
Though that were desperate — but for thy heart,
That it should feel a speechless sufferance
Of ravening ; and this my suffering
Be helpless to amend one throb of thine.
This were the anguish — lo ! when all my soul
Burns, agonizes to assuage each least
Desire of thine, to see thy soul thus sick
Of my same woe : that god-love uncreate
Which broods, yea, broods : will not be comforted.

Yet, well thou knowest what my grief must be.
Haply thy pity will assuage thine own ?

AN ANNUAL CYCLE

IX

AY, what if so this utmost sympathy
Of thine for my grief, of my grief for thee,
Be just such plasmic germ as quickening may
Flower to a full community of joy ?
Behold ! my soul is wholly thus this grief ;
And thine, if I interpret thee aright,
Wholly this grief : that thou in suffering
Receivest in thy heart and mind and all
All that is in me.

I am nought beside
Than love and agony : or mine or thine
I know not. Canst thou then so surely know
Thy suffering nowise my soul in thee ?

LOVE POEMS

X

LET there be no delusion, dear ! The dawn
Of friendship fades far past, and now a flame
Springs in the vault, full-fraught with night and day !
Thou, art thou friend, who yieldest in thyself
Light and the blossoming of all mine earth —
Else outer darkness and the void ? Art thou
Friend, yea, or God, who holdest in my soul
The keys of heaven and hell ; o'er all my being
Power of life in death — and thou alone ?
Day and its night ; heaven in hell : are these
Truths, save of desperate divinity ? —

Love me, else end me ! There is no choice else !

AN ANNUAL CYCLE

XI

LOVE, let the new truth utterly possess
Thy soul and being ! Womanly accept
Life thou createst by receiving so !
Let the sea tell thee ; and the myriad earth
Say nought beside ; and sun and stars alike,
Winds and the canopy of clouds be but
The one all-love that thou encompassst !
Yea, where thou art is presently my soul ;
And where I am is never far from thee. —
Pluck thou the daisy-crown of this mid-year ;
Pull thou its petals wantonly : to learn,
“ He loves me, loves me ” : every ray, the same !

LOVE POEMS

XII

THOU spakest of recollection. But I speak
An instant tragedy of thee and me.
Our whole life speaks it ; and our life is now. —
Let not the past dead-handed still oppress
Thy patient spirit, that the grief of now
Escape thee and its rapture. Let no mood
Of torpor prey upon thee, that the pain
Of present passion be benumb'd in thee.
Livest thou now ; and yet wilt wait to love
Till only deadness shall abide, where now
Is mortal need : and mortal-meant appeal ?

Dearest, I love thee living : not too late.

AN ANNUAL CYCLE

XIII

THOU hast desired of me that I should make
This poetry of private grief for thee.
And duly from the source of infinite loss
Wells the new word, grateful that thou hast given
The privilege of speech. And yet were mine
A world-wide grief that noblier in the speech
Of seer and sophist to the heart of thee
Sings an earth-passion, soul and God and all,
Self-sanction'd, universal !

Such art thou,
The unspoken sanctity. Shall not my song
Make miracle of every soul of earth
To voice thee in thy worldhood as thy Self ?

LOVE POEMS

XIV

FOR thus alone were godhead in the song,
A world of tragedy made lyric too !
If nature, earth, and sky, yea, all above,
Below and of the firmament conspire
To sing thee and to be thy soul in mine,
How noblier, love, how richlier then the song
Must owe thee, thy love and thy tragedy
Made mine in human nature's first and best ?

“ Pilate ” ¹, much moved, would search thy soul : yet
may not.

“ Hegel ” ¹, discoursing of the Christhood in us
Of saviorship, sings but the grace I grasp
By thee. And “ Mary ” ¹ meets thee on the hills.

¹ The personages of certain unpublished religious poems of corresponding titles.

AN ANNUAL CYCLE

XV

URGE me not to concentrate then a sorrow
Which weeps almost from every leaf and blade
And every wave of the sea at sob with it !
Leave me to brood and bear if so I may
A grief which equally through every hour
“ Walks with me, sitteth, yea, and lieth down
“ Companionably ”, 'sooth, and comforting.
What were the gain could I but banish quite
This passion from the generality
Of daily things ? — A world without thy soul
For comfort ; and thyself so piercing sad
'T were past imagining. World-grief were best.

LOVE POEMS

XVI

AND yet I'll scarce admit the grief were less
Subtly acute, for being distributed
Through souls of many men and cognisance
Of multiple philosophies. 'T were but
That I, being thus less isolate, must find
Solace and strength in social self-respect.
What were my private self to bear alone
The splendor or the agony? What I
Sole, to revere and worship thee without
Support and proxihood of whom respect,
Honor and dignity must needs attend?
And in their strength I bear the strongest grief.

AN ANNUAL CYCLE

XVII

PRATE I of proxihood ? The thought of thee
Privily comes upon me, and the world
Is burn'd to one intense white heart of thee
Or me, I know not ! And the sight of thee
Is blood-beats, pulsings of a tiger-wrath
Strong to devour thy very frame and all !
Lo ! it is I, I who am wholly thou !
And it is thou who Art, thou whom I mean ! —
Swear by thy grief, protest by all thy gods
Thou wilt not : and I swear by thy true self,
Thou lovest, lovest me as I love thee —
Even with a wrath that brooks not vicarage !

LOVE POEMS

XVIII

SWEET, I am sick with shame that I have spoke
Such passionate speech : where only reverence
And worship should disturb thee. I have troubled
The pool of thy deep patience ; and stand mute
Before the angel of thy proffer'd peace.

Yet, dwelt there ever utmost reverence
And perfect worship in the soul, but spake
The whole man with them ; if transfigured quite,
Yet none less moved, even through hell's abyss,
By heaven's own splendor ? Shall the depths lie bare
And be not startled ? — Angel, but receive
The passion with the worship : both, for pure.

AN ANNUAL CYCLE

XIX

YEA, for the fashion of our flesh is such
That any energy refused and thwart
Turns inward, preying as with lust and wrath
On that which bore it. And I stand bewray'd
In every act, each effort-energy
Of all in the world, and only in myself
Raven by mad imaginings. I fail
Of any dignity or self-control
And am as one unworthy of thy sight.

Yet, be the angel — thou that profferest peace !
Lift me to thee and prove the worm I am,
Thy seraph, whole and wonderful and high !

LOVE POEMS

XX

LOVE, I would pray thy pardon too in this,
That all my words are still of thee and me.
Fain wouldst thou draw the discourse into dreams
Indifferent, fain interpret through thy world
Some child-enjoyment of the face of things.
And fain would I abet thee. But we are
So otherwise than children, thou and I !
There is a real-world ; and the face of things
Hath soul ; and man and woman are we now,
Past help. Yea, and this soul of everything,
This meaning of the world's reality
And manhood : this thou knowest, Child of God !

AN ANNUAL CYCLE

XXI

I HAVE received of thee a gentlest gift
Meant to be earnest of thy charity.
The grace accorded is accepted so
As thou intendest. Yet thy gift to me
Is life itself, a daily, hourly boon
Of breath to breathe, light to the eyes of me,
Warmth, motion, impact to the subtlest pulse
Call'd mine ; and this, such infinite charity,
Given and accepted without cost for thee
By godliest emanation ! How much more
Shalt thou be godly, giving thy whole self
To my life ! May I faint not, overwhelm'd !

LOVE POEMS

XXII

LOVE, I am bound to thee by love's best vow
Thy celibate and priest. The daily prayer
Pours ceaseless ; and the penitential psalm
Chanteth thy praise to perpetuity. —
What peace of conscience in the faith confess'd !
What sanctity of spirit in the calm,
Clear gleam of sacrificial flame from this
Thy fane ! I minist'ring am more than man
If less than deity !

The altar breathes
With passion of devotion. The rich rite
Seems mine own soul at incense : yea, even I
Myself, thy temple builded without hands !

AN ANNUAL CYCLE

XXIII

AND, if the god absent him for awhile,
What cause for consternation ? Stands not still
Myself this temple, very house of him ?
Lives not the faith ; shall not the rite endure
Firm by a full assurance ? — Ay, some hour
Shall there a light be, seen beneath the dome ;
Within the fane, a voice of holiness
And infinite sanctity. And all at once
Fane, temple wake enraptured where the god
Liveth, transfiguring, transfused of all !

Love, though the vow be the vow's sole reward,
It is enough. — Love's faith is everything.

LOVE POEMS

XXIV

WHY should rebuke be mine that I impute
Divinity to thee and saviourship ? —
Were Christ not human ? Saved He not the world ?
Wherefore, art thou (of all of womankind
The humanest) most like to Christ in this
That thou art saviour of my life and soul.

What were a God that were not I and Thou
To inwardmost belief ? And what were we
Did not the heart accept for very truth
A mutual saviourship creator-wise ?
Lies not my soul's abyss made bare to thee
That thou shalt brood o' the void: and bring forth light ?

AN ANNUAL CYCLE

XXV

IF ways of the world would mean thee, but the more
Art thou the way, the truth and only life
Of all things : yea, as God before world was :
Nay, even as God Who is Himself as each,
And only so is any God or world !
Shall I have fear that God will hide His face
Even from Himself, Whose very nature is
Self-searching ? Shall world's mutual response
Of each to each be to my soul denied
Whose every conscience is of thee alone ?
Lo ! I will have great courage ; and this faith
That God is in thee : Who will work for right.

LOVE POEMS

XXVI

LADY, it is as if thou drewest a sword
Sudden to smite me, whilst that at the gleam
Of the weapon (nay, but at the weapon-flash
Of the swift hate within thee !) I had swoon'd
And left thee foeless : I, dead at thy feet ;
Thine arm enfrustrate by the offenceless air. —
And mine offence is that I love thee still
After rebuffal through these life-long days.

Have patience, love, awhile ; possess thy soul
If but a moment. For I love thee so
I will endure thine eyes ; stung by their strength
Will start and stand — for thee to strike me through !

AN ANNUAL CYCLE

XXVII

IN measure as my faith in thee is strong
Makest thou trial and default of it :
Denying love, yet bidding me accept
Truth of denial. For the more my love
(And love or faith alike is wholly thine !),
The more is love the truth of thee ; and this
An error that thou offerest for belief.

Believe the paradox ! At worst it were
A custom and a common frailty
For love to find love yet in everything.
Wherefore, if love be truth of everything
And thou be all — how reconcile the lie ?

LOVE POEMS

XXVIII

IN sooth, the untruth was not always thine.
Believe, love, love sees trulier ; and thine hour
Of insight hath been when thy word and deed,
Speaking thy soul, portray'd no paradox
Nor offer'd any crucifix to faith !

I do believe that thou art purblind now,
Since thou insistest on thy nescience.
Only I ask thee, if love be but source
Of every information, how thy sight,
Being loveless, so assures of any truth ?
Thy “ Neti, Neti ”, can it wisely mean
“ I love not ”, if at heart thou dost not love ?

AN ANNUAL CYCLE

XXIX

THY “Neti, Neti”, this it were that seems
Some formula, some funerary cult
Spoke in a mystic sense of some one dead.
It bears no living meaning to the ear
Of one who knows the vital fact of soul.
To one who knoweth thee it meaneth nought
Save some bewilderment and mystery.

Belovèd, I toil : but nowise well-ordain’d
Unto a ministry ; not girded for
Any salvation. Yet not wholly waste,
Haply against the hour when that I’ve wrought
Shall rectify itself in thy re-birth.

LOVE POEMS

XXX

AND how cease utterance, when all beside,
Save utterance in toneless-tragic speech,
Be utterly forbidden to my love ?
For what were love which never moved its world,
Was never moved, but bided, bided still
A simulacrum or a vacancy,
But nothing loving ? — Dear, and thus I wait,
Speaking, though otherwise not troubling thee :
A Memnon vocal to thy distantness.
Dear, for thou scoff'dst : “ 'T were chiefly, as I find,
“ Thy presence that prevents. Thy screed I love ! ” —
I yield thee absence. Love, what now precludes?

AN ANNUAL CYCLE

XXXI

LOVE, but mine eyes must see thee and mine ears
Hear thee anew, so be it I may make sure
Thou art the very woman whom I love.
For she was of a perfect intimacy
In me, anticipating every pain
And learning every agony, untold.
And she responded to each human need
With voice for voice, ay, with an harmony
Which heal'd ; and, being inspired but to restore
A soul to sanity, sang from the soul.

But thou within my heart art vague and blind,
And canst not even answer to thy name.

LOVE POEMS

XXXII

HOW long, belovèd, will thy heart belie
Thy soul's divinity ? O love, how long ?
Here be the great days of remaining youth,
Whilst still is hope of some high destiny
(With thee, how high a destiny indeed !)
And souls should be at labor to bring forth
Abiding worth. Yet here I mutely wait,
Too desolate, daily incapable
Of any least accomplishment ; for none
Are worth the lonely labor, nor the pain
Of enterprise unshared with thee. And thou ?
Art thou then quite content that things are so ?

AN ANNUAL CYCLE

XXXIII

LIFE lieth in the hollow of thy hand
To give and take ; to take unto thyself
By giving utterly. And with the gift
Will come new strength and new accomplishment,
Doubly divine for me or thee : for both.
Were it a strange and vast nobility,
Could we apart, each with a separate craft,
Create some splendor ? Were the tragedy
Uplifting, searching, to suffice for both ?

Dear, nought sufficeth, save our love, to lift
Me from a mire of meanness. Shalt thou say :
“No Poet shall be moulded of my love” ?

LOVE POEMS

XXXIV

LOVE, men have mock'd me, scoffing: "He but dwells
"In unreality, a realm of dream
"All incommunicable; for its stuff
"Is alien to our human sympathy."
And I have patiently but laid mine hand
On this or the other solid stone of earth
To touch it and, if dream there truly was,
Be waked out of the dream and sane with men.
Yet no awakening cometh; and these stones
Seem very stone-like as I touch them, dear.

Ay, no awakening! And this world of thine,
That means "I will not", scoffs there, mocking me.

AN ANNUAL CYCLE

XXXV

FOR, lo ! I, weary of the touch of stone
In all things, put my hand forth as a man
To feel thy woman-hand, and be — not waked —
But healingly confirm'd in that high faith
Men call a dream and alien. And my hand
Stretcheth : but all that showeth of vital power
Is shadow ; and the substance nowhere seen.

Even as, belovèd, in a blessèd sleep
I dream'd in truth thou lovedst ; and mine eyes
Were all one golden light and in my soul
Was splendor as of morning. — Dear, I woke.
The sun had risen. Forsooth, it was the day !

LOVE POEMS

XXXVI

STRANGE, should I learn to laugh contemptuous
On thee, that thou imaginest my love
Should wither with this withering of thee ! —
If, as thou sayest, mine heart did ne'er know thee,
Did never feel thy fire, nor take thy truth,
Nor see within thy splendor ; if mine eyes
Created thine out of the night and day,
Mine ears devised thy music, and my hands
Held stone at parting and at greeting thee :
How should thine alteration touch my love ?

Strange, should thine alteration breed contempt
And justify while still refuting thee !

AN ANNUAL CYCLE

XXXVII

OUT of the depths, deep as the naked soul
I cry to thee : and there is none to hear.
For the god sleepeth ; or adventureth
A journey ; or hath never need of ears ;
Or, hearing, will not hear. And still I cry.
Yea, from the depths I mounting by my soul
Aspire to stand before thee, that thine eyes
May see and help thee hear (as the deaf use)
The anguish by this agony of prayer.
And I have knelt within thy very gaze
Unseen as still unheard.

I thank thee, dear.

What worse-than-sorrow : shouldst thou hear and see !

LOVE POEMS

XXXVIII

FOR, shouldst thou know the passion and the shame
Wherethrough this soul upreacheth still to thee ;
Shouldst thou but sense the Hell wherefrom I strain
To touch thee and be human — in that hour
Wouldst thou awake indeed and hurl me back
Down, down a-howling whence I might not breathe
(Like Satan whom the flame-bursts alone feed) ;
So saving thy soul by true death of mine ! —
Or in that hour might some new strength bestir
To reach me and uphold whom only thou
Canst teach salvation ? Dearest, wouldst thou learn
Create mine heaven : yet nowise 'spoil thine own ?

AN ANNUAL CYCLE

XXXIX

YEA, for the soul of man is high as God
If lower still than Satan. And no soul
Is past salvation. And no soul that stoops
To save need fear but God is stooping too.
I, in and of the abyss, yet know myself
Divine by thus aspiring to thee ;
By thee and through thee is my conscience clean,
My breast a seraph's in the sight of all.
Thus, if thou stoopest, bringing with thee breath
Of heaven's own spaces, shalt thou lift at last
An unclean thing that shall contaminate
Even thee ? Or shalt thou doubly be divine ?

LOVE POEMS

XL

SO in the metaphor of many a creed
We speak forth love, earth's common miracle.
So with the meaning of a lover's heart
I find truth in imaginings untrue
Save to their faith that frees them. I, unworth
To lace the latchet of thy shoe, may yet
Mouth of the powers of heaven as of hell :
Heaven, thy daily breathing-room ; as hell,
But mine ensufferance. And I dare deny
My birthright of contempt, giving earth name
Which seers have known and loved life by.
And borrow
Assurance of the name ; and worship thee.

AN ANNUAL CYCLE

XLI

FOR thou art not “ as earth’s horizon-verge
“ A limit ” to my life and still afar.
But thou art very near, more near than aught
Hand toucheth or sight taketh outwardly.
Ears, though they hear, are not thy dwelling-place.
But as the daily, hourly intercourse
Of conscienced enterprise through every act
Doth mutually intropermeate
Earth spirit-wise through every spirit of earth ;
Even in the nearness as the verge of things,
Life’s outwardness that meaneth inwardly
But inwardness : art thou. — What else were God ?

LOVE POEMS

XLII

THEREFORE, a little absence, doth it end
The power and purpose of thy soul in mine ?
Though I am wrack'd and worn, that speech with thee
Would shake me as a reed ; though the heart break
At every casual inference of thee
In each environment nor thee nor thine —
Art thou less with me that thou carest not ?
Doth not my love fare forth to wing with thee
Whither thou wilt, learning anew her world
By sympathy in every walk of thine ?

Fare the world over, shall my heaven-in-hell
Attend thee : and thine omnipresence stand.

AN ANNUAL CYCLE

XLIII

BEHOLD ! my spirit is spread with thee beyond
Boundaries of the north or of the east !
Earth is as nothing to the heart of thee !
Big by thy breath's afflatus swells my soul
To power, performance, yea, accomplishment
Of all that stands work-worthy. And the world
Seems worth the labor in the love of thee !

Set thou the trophy : and the meed I claim
Art thou, the preordainèd of my love.
State thou the terms of service : and I swear
The stint completed ere thy speech shall cease. —
Or state them not : and 't is to move the world !

LOVE POEMS

XLIV

THOU sayest (withholding comfort) that thy care
Must be for truth's sake — did I ask aught else ?
Yea, have I sued that thou shouldst live a lie ;
Or lend thee to a fraud no soul should speak
Of man or woman to give comfort in it ?

When did I outrage truth in learning thee ?
Or tell thee false that thou shouldst fool thine ear ?

Only, hast thou not heard yet ? Knowest thou not
The name I call thee by that best means thee ?
If thou wilt love and lend thy whole soul to it
Shall not thy care, so surely comforting,
Be then most surely for the sake of truth ?

AN ANNUAL CYCLE

XLV

WAS it with poor excuse of easing thee
One atom of thy pain that I profess'd
This undertaking of these songs of love ?
Was there pretence that I by any mean
Might stifle self to furnish voice to thee ?
A sorry mummerly ! Might tongue so false
Be fitted to thine utterance ? Speaks the soul
By any puppetry ? — Love, if the song
Hath moved thee anywhither ; anywise
Been ease and solace to thee ; 't is but truth
That makes the miracle : my love for thee
At labor in thy soul to bring forth love.

LOVE POEMS

XLVI

DEAR, and perchance a whispering untoward
Hath sneer'd : " His soul is but a voyager.
" My love to-day ; to-morrow, any heart's
" That neighbors him in his excursioning !
" An heart so deft to snatch at any straw
" Needs no salvation else ; is skill'd to swim :
" May sink — for all his outcry to my soul ! "

A wanderer, indeed, and well-nigh done
In this his desperate search ; an heart so used
To prove straws, straws ; that any helping hand
Had seem'd but mockery. — What last good chance
That Thou didst never lean : to loose thine hold !

AN ANNUAL CYCLE

XLVII

AND yet I rise beside thee and I find
Thee home and haven : and belong with thee.
If of the stranger and the homeless house
I long have suffer'd hospitality,
If of the blank sea I have still outstared
Innumerable meaningless dismays
To mock me with imagined peace at last ;
Am not I but the wiselier skill'd to know
The authentic sign, the genuine report
Of sight and reason to the journey's end ?

If of the world I voyage still a space
Who may not dwell with thee : know I not Home ?

LOVE POEMS

XLVIII

IF I in speech have been unfaithful to thee,
Or misdirected any deed from thee,
Neglected thee in thought or follow'd after
The sweetness of another soul than thine :
Forgive me ; an there be aught to forgive !

From now, no more : I vow thee ! — Were there
though

Blameworthiness in following thy command ?
Sin, in abjuring so a God untoward
Whose worship were prohibited of Him ? —
Yet shall I clean me of obedience
With prayer and fasting ; and be bold before thee,
Fearing not thee : for all thy holiness.

AN ANNUAL CYCLE

XLIX

YEA, rather, overlook the poor pretence,
Forgive the feign'd obedience to thy will,
The still forsworn forswearing ! And forget
That I have hidden beyond the seas and sands
The rites of worship homelier-taught of thee.
If a strange sun hath taken incense for thee
And hymns of thee borne but a mystic name,
If sweetness of thy soul but seem'd too sweet
In some far hint of how thy heart might love :
Ignore the self-deception. Nay, accept
For faithfulness the extreme shift of life
To save thy people to thy service still.

LOVE POEMS

L

AND thou, wouldst thou not scorn the proffer'd zeal
Of one who lisp'd : " No beauty in the world
" Nor worth is there whereon I'd wish to look
" Nor seek to dwell with, save but thine alone ;
" I who in absolute innocence of love
" Now swear I love thee, peerless beyond all
" Which owe no privilege ! " ? Had he fit sense
Of thee ?

But rather lay I at thy feet
A worship that proclaimeth every heart
And soul of earth right worshipful : in thee
All focuss'd and concentred, sphere in sphere
Orb'd to love's universal immanence.

AN ANNUAL CYCLE

LI

FOR thus in thy dear person thou dost lead
Captive the world ; affording world free life !
Thus art thou nowise comparable through
Earth's length and breadth that were but earth at all
By being contain'd of thee and so sustain'd.
Therefore is meaning, reason and respect
In faith and worship ; that acknowledgment
Of thee creates the world, maintains it whole
By the love-miracle. And any worth
Declared of earth declareth but of thee
The wonder and the glory. Love, wert thou
Loveworthy, were thy world not worthy too ?

LOVE POEMS

LII

THEREFORE, to be fit mate unto thy soul,
Must a man learn to love (so comprehend)
All things 'soever ; that he well may know
Thee by the splendor that is wholly thine.
I from my youth have everywhere, with heart
Open to understanding, sought to search
The deepmost soul of things, being of faith
Soul doth lie deepmost and is soul at last,
'Soe'er bewray'd and 'wilder'd. Shall I now
Deny soul ? Shall I cease an infinite search
Through all thy regions, that my reverence
Hath proved thy godhead in the loved and known ?

AN ANNUAL CYCLE

LIII

LOVE ! for that power which only thou canst give me —
To toil and be not wearied ; which thy love
Alone can grant — to fail nor be dismay'd !
I from my youth have toil'd and have been wearied ;
Yea, I have ever fail'd and been dismay'd.
Now hath dismay wholly got hold of me
And weariness. I toil not nor attempt ;
But only wait thy mercy and thy word. —
Nor is it service thus to stand and wait.

Therefore I móst am utterly unworth
Thy love when most demanding of thee love
To make me godlike and fit mate for thee.

LOVE POEMS

LIV

TIME was when I with firmer fortitude
And some philosophy was wont to dream :
“ No failure can be where the soul is strong
“ To toil and takes success in work’s own sake
“ And needeth no results else.” If I fail’d
And stood dismay’d, I laugh’d : “ ’T were but the fault
“ Of this dismay. On ! with a strength the more
“ Unconquerable that the touch of earth
“ Hath taught invigoration ! From the mire
“ Were loftier leap to flight than from that mound ! ”

Now that I know thine inspiration, shall
The leap sink lifeless ? Shall the song be nought ?

AN ANNUAL CYCLE

LV .

THE singer is not other than the song ;
Nor is the song, love, other stuff than love
In every inference. Thou lovest not
The singer ? Let it be : thou lov'st the song.
What more might be desired or attain'd ?

Yet, thou wilt say : “ Because I am assured
“ By my self-searching that I love not thee ;
“ Then is thy syllogism strain'd and false,
“ The logic wanting. Else, the love I feel
“ Even for the song is never love like thine. —
“ Pardon an heedless word. Such love I mean not.” —
Thus from my soul is taken that it hath.

LOVE POEMS

LVI

LOVE, once again have I transgress'd the bounds
Set for the speech of man unto thine ear ;
Once again begg'd the benediction of
Thy lips to mine. Love, canst thou still forgive ?

Some can kiss lightly : not so thou ; nor I.
Nought can give absolution from the sin
Of such solicitation ; though thou still
Forgivest, I can in no wise forgive
My blasphemy. —

And yet, were the prayer heard,
What consecration beyond blasphemy ;
What perfect absolution ! Still canst thou
Save me ; yea, still absolve from every sin.

AN ANNUAL CYCLE

LVII

CALL this I ask of thee no trifling boon ;
But love, the greatest of all things of earth.
Then, but because thy very soul is great,
Will this be easy that I ask of thee,
The saving of my soul. Faith, hope, I have them.
'T is charity that thou alone canst give.

Yet have I charity : for that is life ;
And life is of the winter as of spring.
Rouseth the year but by the year's own power
Of earth-résuscitance sustain'd of earth ?
Shall my soul wait thee, when thy soul in mine
Is quick-responsive to each hour of need ?

LOVE POEMS

LVIII

THIS miserable pleading with thy soul,
Forgive it as all earth forgives the prayer
Of murder'd autumn ! Could the season yield
Sense to the stroke, and not in one last flash
Of outraged blood betray the heart that beats
Most hotly by the anguish ? If the life
Stains forest-floor and cloud-rack with the hue
Of martyrdom, shall blame be that the world
Dies unrecanting and unreconciled ?

Pray thou that thy forgiveness reach me deep,
Deep as the unrelenting agony :
And hearten me to die as the dropt leaf.

AN ANNUAL CYCLE

LIX

LOVE, now in autumn woods I, with thee walking,
Weep the lost springtime that so sweetly brought
Thee to the threshold of my soul ; and summer
That saw thee consciously enshrined of it.
This other season, is it fruit of those ?
Are these thy woman's words and thy loved ways
Which crumble and are dust beneath the feet
Of any wayfarer ; which, while the light
Blazed and the day were torrid-parch'd without,
Spread for a solace to my private soul ?
Was thy care nature's, with the weeks to pass ?
Shall winter rack me leafless and alone ?

LOVE POEMS

LX

YET, would I change one word of all thy truth
Hath said ; or have thee other than thou art
By any subterfuge ? Must not thy soul
Grow as the changes of the season'd year ?
I gaze abroad ; and mark how intimate
This harshening of the forest ; how her speech
Is frank if not so fair, and nature's dearth
Duly reveal'd bespeaks but chastening
Toward nobler birth. — Shall not my heart accept
The forest-omen ; sepulchre my soul
To terrible endurance, till a surge
Of re-birth wake and wrap me with thy spring ?

AN ANNUAL CYCLE

LXI

I FEEL the still snows sifting over me,
Shrouding the scars of earth and brooding all
In crystal benediction. Over me
The wroth stream stiffens and the torrent takes
An immortality of moveless force ;
And all things are as iron. Here some gale
Lashes aloft a sleet and stinging storm ;
But rives no roots from out the vise and grasp
That is my spirit. If a stricken groan
Gasps from the rigid sap-wood — 't is not mine.
My life is ended till the year hath moved.

Thou canst take up that thou alone laid'st down.

LOVE POEMS

LXII

THUS in the weak year's frenzied metaphor
I face the disenchantment ; front the world
With one wan yearning to be hale and free
In winter's way of self-dependence still
Who scarce may quicken sunward. How the rack'd
And feverish spirit turns refresh'd and firm
To stand alone of frost and be of will
To buffet and be busied ; brutally
To do the day's insensate task and toil !

How noblest, to be mad for love of thee ;
And not do madly ! How beyond all praise,
To worship yet deny thee for my God !

AN ANNUAL CYCLE

LXIII

I, WHO am daily deeper drawn within
The shadow as of sin born in the blood ;
Who from the blackness of self-cynicism
And vile world-weariness descry thy stars ;
Cry to thee : “ Yea, Lord, save thy people still ! ”

Should all the best and dearest, upon earth
Remaining, die about me : and I live ;
Should every undertaking all-wise fail
As presently have fail'd me all my works :
And I still labor ; I might deem me saved
And thee a living God as formerly ! —
But now what sign assures me that I love ?

LOVE POEMS

LXIV

I FEEL upon my lips a look like thine
I had not understood till latterly.
And in mine eyes (what shone in thine like love !)
A searching misery : for the vacant world
Is passionate and bitter ; and I learn
Thee by the suffering so like to thine.

And as I learn thee hour by hour, and know
The desperate-sweet abysses of thy soul,
Space by space with the insight waxeth loss ;
Deathlike, though vital in the sympathy.
For I, I may but breathe and be at all
Only by utterly forswearing thee.

AN ANNUAL CYCLE

LXV

SO hath the year come round wherein my love
Did spring and blossom and send leafage forth
And strike deep root in earth ; and wither with
The season's withering ; and die away
And lie in snow sepulchred. And the spring
Is delicate over earth ; and myriad buds
Push forth to feed on warmth and light : a film
Of hope before the eyes, and through the air
A gossamer radiance of vitality. —
I see these signs, as leaves look shuddering up
Out of some forest-charnel, whom the drift
Thawing reveals to rot in dimness there.

LOVE POEMS

LXVI

FOR I am nothing in the round of earth.
Her strength sweeps over me and surges by
My soul fast buried, ay, though bare and blown
As any weed-husk. If by dreaming toward
The faint confusion I imagine days
Of beauty and splendor still to come for earth ;
If by compulsion of my sapless cells
And frost-stript fibres I may fondly feel
The life lost yester-year yet wonderful
Elsewhere and otherwise than as I lie —
'T is all. The sun in heaven proves dark, with thee :
And these my seeds are barren from their birth.

AN ANNUAL CYCLE

LXVII

LOVE, even in the moment of a death
That voided earth, sprang still the power of thee
Insistent, vital. If world ended not
With such an end, then nought that is of breath
Can anywise deny thee. Could the dead
Know thee, they were arisen full of life.

Yet, love, the wearying, wearying-out of love !
The terrible insistency of death
To take at last even the life of life
And leave a gasping after vacantness ! —
The void swoons in. Were I a thing of breath
'T were otherwise. The dead cannot know thee.

LOVE POEMS

LXVIII

I FELT, when the stiff, simulated fate
Seized on my sinews and the pulse-beats paused,
Breath-labor ceased and every sense swoon'd off,
Then that I was permitted to proclaim
Protest supreme at life's intolerable
Indifference to intolerable death.
And yet what protest so were possible ?
What yielding thus to death were any cure
For death's injustice ? — And the life return'd :
Lifting me chasten'd and subdued to bear
The uttermost injustice love can know :
Nor ask that any enter protest for me.

AN ANNUAL CYCLE

LXIX

UNTO all souls that sorrow be my sorrow
For expiation that I ever sought
An happiness ; my grief beyond all grief
Be unto grief a last apology !
Lo ! with what hush'd and awful penitence
I, bow'd by disappointment as a cloud,
Yearn to that ultimate companionship
Of them that sit in darkness. And the shadow
Of somewhat more than darkness bred before me
Spreads gloom ; vouchsafes assurance how with them
I sit me down forgiven : in the dust
And ashes ashen ; reconciled with death.

POEMS OF GNOSTICISM

POEMS OF GNOSTICISM

I

BELOVÈD, it is too true I was not fit
To stand before thee, saying, "Here am I!"
The manner of my life was not as now
A glad thank-offering, nor mine inmost soul
(Save as thou hadst fill'd erst the vast of it!)
A space of consecration. And my life
(But for the truth life once belong'd to thee)
Was void dispersion; and mine energy
Of soul some dispossess'd perplexedness
Daily degenerating out of strength. —
Nay, that some song had seem'd approved of thee
But made a misery of the dream of it.

LOVE POEMS

II

BEHOLD, I was as nothing in myself
Save as I tended toward thee. And when thou
Withdrewest unto thyself and didst deny
My birthright of approach unto thy soul ;
Forbad'st access, and madest of my prayer
Crime against reason : then each hour by hour
Was my distracted motion turn'd away
From my best self and substance ; that my life
Was loss each hour by hour, losing earth all
With thee ; my faith, my reaching out to thee
But proven mine isolation : in each act
Frustration of an aimless finitude.

POEMS OF GNOSTICISM

III

FOR, as the world of old cosmology
Defined of form and motion, I'd aspired
With seeming guarantee of goal divine
Through manifestation many and diverse
In preordain'd succession : dreaming on
A progress, an enfolding of my past
In that which springeth from it presently
To new ennoblement. And, like that world,
Betray'd by sudden orphanage from thee
I waked to degradation ; feeling each
Necessitated onwardness some loss
Of vital potency from what had been.

84

LOVE POEMS

IV

AND, though in hours of insight I had known
The refutation of their fault involved
In any definition of a world
As soulless mechanism — how, without
Mind is the mechanism but metaphor
For teleology extrinsic to it ;
And but by teleology of force
Intrinsic to each individual fact
Were mass at all mechanic in itself
(Only by thee within me were I whole) —
Yet for the hour was mine emotion mad
With strength-dispersion in each act of me.

POEMS OF GNOSTICISM

V

YEA, I had known how every least impact,
Even by its wide impulse illimitable,
Concludeth in the essence of each part,
As it is part, the substance of the whole ;
And thus alone were any whole defined,
By comprehension inwardly of each
By each throughout love's wisdom-universe.
Love, I had known love and the logic-law
Delimiting, discriminating love
In constitution of the truth call'd soul :
Yet, feeling not soul's self-creativeness
Beyond loss, I was as one dispossess'd.

LOVE POEMS

VI

LOVE, in the earlier light, illusive proved,
Each effort (as some flowering of faith)
Seem'd concentration, each to new consent,
Of all toward thee ; each, cumulative proof
Anew of worth and wonder, dignity
And rapture at thy ruling. And everywhere
Seem'd new-won manifestation, new-defining
Divinity of thee. The world had growth,
Warranting, if but by the hope divine
That look'd before and after, even that sense
Of incompleteness which the past must show.
Each act seem'd victory — for all its cost.

POEMS OF GNOSTICISM

VII

AND victory, alone by costing sore.
The inevitable failure to obtain
Any consent from thee, the God I 'd move,
Though guarantee at worst that I through thee
Felt fate-reality, yet point by point
Frustrated each accomplishment, debarr'd
My strength from soulhood ; left me in myself
Self-thwart and baffled : only in that sense
Of terrible discontent yet nobler than
Their pure degenerate automatism
Void of all conscience of unworthiness.
For my degeneracy was still — mine own.

LOVE POEMS

VIII

AND therefore when at last thou didst destroy
All vestige of thy loved divinity,
Didst wipe from the world at a word each symbol, sign
And imputation of the creed I 'd known ;
Then was I fallen beneath despair at last,
A soulless thing, an atom-vacancy,
A maelstrom with no meaning : nought to move,
Nought to be moving. And the unceasing song
(For song, though shamed, remain'd to show I still
Lived) was of nothing living : only death
Was burden of the voice that still spake thee.
And but for song had I been wholly dead.

POEMS OF GNOSTICISM

IX

BUT : with the miracle that song remain'd
Over, beyond my mere mechanic breath
(That someway was an unity unknown
Required of faith to make conceivable
The very isolation); and with a true
Development, within the thought of death,
Of life the all-containing self-contain'd :
Awoke in me wiselier the deity
Of thee as of some immanence, unlike
A goal beyond my striving : but attain'd
With every impact of activity,
In so far forth as altering my world.

LOVE POEMS

X

IT were not that an immanence not I
Pervadeth broadcast through an outer earth
Or thee or not-thee as the chance might stand.
For then wert thou else deity but of stone,
Else pre-establish'd as some truth-for-all
Unvitalizing, undefined at last
By any effort: hence, no truth of mine.
'T were rather that each personal intent
Were ineffectual, earth were anarchism,
Save for thy mutualizing unity.
An unioning itself defined (thy truth
Love-comprehended) by each act of me.

POEMS OF GNOSTICISM

XI

AND therefore, in so far as strength might stir
To some accomplishment, conserved I thee ;
And, finding day by day beneath mine hand
This, that, or other opportunity
For action ; was I as a world sustain'd
Even by the infinity which had seem'd loss,
Even by the interminability of change
Proceeding outward through an universe
From each least impact of each part on part
(Thereby made whole, my part through thee !); thereby,
By being as fact infinitesimal,
Not isolate but infinite, each truth.

LOVE POEMS

XII

AND therefore since, without the former shame
Of imperfection striving but toward thee
Nor as by isolation utterly
Debarr'd from thee, I learn thy saving truth
As essence of my being and know thee
For immanent although thou bidest apart :
Therefore for thee now fit (as earth for earth's
Own absolution) 'fore thy face I stand
Saying : " Thou life within me, here am I ! " —
I was not alway so. But I have come
Through orphanage from thee ; and am as one
Whom fire hath purged and fear hath clarified.

POEMS OF GNOSTICISM

XIII

FOR now I dream not with the formal creeds :
“ This is of thee, O God, this hint of love.
“ And this, this implication of an hell,
“ This lovelessness is nothing of thy deed.”
Nor with the nescience of their modern cant
I cry : “ Heart scarce may know thee. Thou art nought ;
“ Else art some mystery beyond man’s sight
“ Indifferent to his world.” — For then were I
Unfit for thee, whether in all my ways
Of godlessness, or as the earlier fault
That knows not God in His world-tragedy.
But I, I learn thee in each hour I live.

LOVE POEMS

XIV

WHEREFORE am I most fit to stand before thee
With the unceasing prayer : “ Love, here am I.”
Though I be as the basest of the unclean
(And who, in speech unto thy sanctity,
Were better than blasphemer ?), must I be
Nevertheless ennobled, as thy sight
Is mine ; as to the pure all things are pure.
Wherefore I do avow : “ I am not fit.”
Even as this desperate passionate poor world
Stands overtly unworthy of the soul
Which constantly conserves and self-redeems
Its loss and nescience unto absolute worth.

POEMS OF GNOSTICISM

XV

THUS too I speak the truth out unto thee
As to an oracle and confessional
From one whose conscience of acknowledged sin
Placeth his heart in power and purity
To teach thine obligation to thy world.
Though I have call'd thee oracle, I prove
No oracle nor any world-withdrawn
Mysterious equivocality
Divine. If I, by being of the earth earth,
Have conscience of divinity through thine,
Then must thou, to be inmost thyself
A god, have conscience of thy world in me.

LOVE POEMS

XVI

SO till the end make I to thee my song
And pray to thee : "Belovèd, here am I" —
Insistent : that this fire and fear (wherethrough
I as the modern thought of men am come —
Through losing God and with their god all worth
Of worldhood ; and through darkness that is felt
Of nescience — now anew am come to thee),
That this thy world, proving divinity,
May enter in and new-define thy spirit
Unto reciprocation. For without
The world as thou hast made it art thou nought. —
Belovèd, my life is love. Be thine but so.

POEMS OF GNOSTICISM

XVII

FOR, though the tragedy of earth be still
Thy meaning, and divine, though there be nought
That is not of thee, yet hath earth degrees
Of God-accomplishment, and earth would fain
Be saved from self by self's own cognizance
Of new-won consecration through thy soul.
Hence, when I pray thee : " Be thou of this world
" Savior in thine own sight by entering in
" To this my tragedy of me and thee ",
I ask thee not some bitter sacrament !
I ask thee but to lift unto thy lips
The poison-cup to find it fill'd with wine.

LOVE POEMS

XVIII

YEA ; for, though in my bitterness of heart
(Like orphan'd earth, save for sad consciousness
Even of the orphanage) I seem'd to thee
Deservedly an outcast from thy sight ;
And though these orisons wherewith my soul
Seeks rehabilitation may to thee
Seem as some sophistry ; I cannot yield
That I, who know myself to love thee well,
When loved by thee shall show by any sign
Failure of full reciprocal desert
To save thee as thy service saves me now.
So thy creation singeth : creating thee.

AN EGYPTIAN JOURNEY

AN EGYPTIAN JOURNEY

MID-OCEAN

ONCE again call the leagues unto my soul :

“ Be thou, as wave and froth of the white sea,

“ No more a sufferer station'd, but a power

“ Wanton as heaven blown over the earth

“ Strong, saline, health-fill'd, unconfinable

“ To freshen and renew and be alive

“ With world's on-moving ! ” Once again I take

The heave and throb that proves an onward pulse

And plunge of this sea-monster.

And the verge

Of the east shall mean thee and the rising sun :

Even as this sun that sinks now in the west

With thee to slumber — while I wake and move.

LOVE POEMS

THE GULF OF LYONS

BEHOLD ! a barrier of antiquity
Thrust in between us ! For myself have pass'd
The Pillars ; and am borne of this blue gulf,
The Carthaginian Sea. And one long year
Is blotted from my life since last I stood
Before the Pillars, paused and enter'd not
But turn'd and plough'd a pathway home — to thee !

Now hath my home forsaken me. I turn,
Sick though at soul ; pause not ; but enter in
And feel the ancient world so near alive
Without me : that within me thy loved year
Drops dead. And Carthage only sails with me.

AN EGYPTIAN JOURNEY

VESUVIUS

YET how the passion of earth and agony,
Though issued in a thousand awful streams
Of fire to shake and shatter, buried deep,
A civilization ; and though sepulchring
Cered dust through centuries ; spring born at last
To some new purpose, some support of hope
And trust in human duty. — Lo ! what dream
Of peace, luxuriant serenity,
Yon vineyarded Sorrento smiling, yea,
On earth's avenger. Ay, and that wasp-work
Call'd Pozzuoli plaster'd on the hills.
And Ischia, chasten'd yet imperishable.

LOVE POEMS

POMPEII

THOUGH, be the last prayer of mine ashen soul
That none unbury what this love hath burnt !
Live the world as it will ; yea, wake my heart
To laughter and dancing and earth's green anew
(Mocking dead days imprison'd and the passion
Sodden and cloddish that bears down upon them):
Be the long years ensuing what they will
Of bright vitality — mine hour is run
Of faith and power and beauty. I would lie
Rather choked up with dust that was a flame ;
Than stir and rouse me, move and breathe about
A stranger under heaven : my charr'd soul, cold !

AN EGYPTIAN JOURNEY

ÆTNA

YET art thou still a spirit above all
This froth and turmoil of the narrow seas
Tall, angel-vestured and thine head held high,
Snow-splendid unto heaven and the sun.
We of the tumult and the desperate straits
May pray to thee ; may, in the depth of need,
Leap landward, struggling in Charybdis' swirl :
And drown or not drown — were it aught to thee ?

I, who in blessèd hours of summer's ease
Have seen thy clouds snatch'd as by thine own hand
Bare from thine heart ; and known thee lean to me
With overpowering sweetness : need I die ?

L. of C.

LOVE POEMS

THE LAND OF GOSHEN

NAY, I will live, take comfort as I may
In this low land thy scorn hath left to me,
Wherein to sojourn till an hour be born
Of Godhood and of home-return. No home
Can there be here for me nor for my God ;
Yea, only space for tarrying awhile :
Yet were there lesser gods who here their home
Had made through countless ages ; here did dwell
Worshippers somewise, Pharaoh's folk who call'd
This deep dark earth and fertilizing flood
Mother and father unto them. — Perchance
The flesh-pots of the spirit here were full.

AN EGYPTIAN JOURNEY

THE BUILDERS

AY, here is history not unlike thine
Of high endeavor toward divinity
Spoilt in an half-creation : this, of power
Sans soul ; thy faith, of insight but not will.
Yet thou, like these, conceivedst an altar-place
Unto the most high God ; and like to these
Didst build thee temples and adorn thee shrines
Within the brain and heart and soul of me :
That all was holy ; that the land had sung
One cycle of praise and worship.

Shalt thou let
Thy temples turn sarcophagi ? Yea, build we
And cease : and are as these left by the way ?

LOVE POEMS

MOKATTAM

I

LOVE, I have sat and seen the sun go down
On Egypt, pyramid and minaret,
Stark desert hills, green harvests and the mists
Of epoch-ancient cities : all of one
Gold glow ; and heard the noise of beast and man
Ascending as though earth were new and had not
Lived through her day and yearn'd still unto night :
That, now descending, ends all. And I feel
The meaning of those towers that crumble down
Whilst calling still to heaven ; and of those tombs
Of some dead man-god which are temples, yea,
And shall be temples when these homes are not.

AN EGYPTIAN JOURNEY

II

FOR I have lived the sorrows and the shames
Of some long mystery ; and in myself
Been as the passing of a world of kings
Through many sunsets. And am come to know
The poignance of yon hearth-smoke that ascends
In straight, thin air-shafts through the yellowing light
Mixt with those voices. — And I am alone
Weighing the wonder of a crumbling heaven
And death abiding and the dust of things
And misery : I alone, of these gaunt cliffs,
Watching the sundown. It was night-time then
With me and Egypt. — Was it morn with thee ?

LOVE POEMS

THE PYRAMID

“THY shadow on these burning sands shall swing
“Noon, yea, and noon ; though all thou heldst of man
“Shall long be dust. And, with the perishing
“Of all he held immortal, shall the creed
“Which built thee to contain eternal life
“Lift from the world and leave thee nakedly
“An heap of stone.” —

And still my shadow, like
This desert pile's, out on the desert leaps
At morning, swings over the barren world
Till evening lengthens it on homes of men
In coolness. Yet the creed that built my soul
Is lifted : and I lie before thee stone.

AN EGYPTIAN JOURNEY

MEMPHIS

MY love was some vast city stretch'd abroad
Through league on league. And in me there did dwell
Grandeur. And all the tribute of the world
Was wholly mine. Mine early God was not
As Egypt's lesser gods : but pure and fit
To stand by Brahma at Jehovah's hand.

Now there is nothing left of all that was.
Only some sepulchres ; ay, and, 't is said,
Some image of the God that men have found
And kept for chronicle. — And on the earth
My bulk lies shatter'd. And the desert birds
Have made a station of mine ears and eyes.

LOVE POEMS

PTAH

MEN have imagined gods. But God is dead.
The substance of all gods is not as they,
Creature of time and circumstance ; but His
Impassibility is absolute.
And therefore is the grave-cloth, not the crown,
His symbol ; and His frame is emptiness.

Love, we have sought through ages to attain
A godship that is absolute as His,
No creature : yet, no emptiness, but fill'd
With world's totality : and named it Love. —
I had attain'd and lived. But now my frame
Is emptiness ; uncrown'd. And God is dead.

AN EGYPTIAN JOURNEY

THE SPHINX

SUN hath turn'd no full cycle yet since Sphinx
First gazed on flood and harvest. But the fruit
Of earth is elsewhere garner'd than of yore.
And the great sand encroaches. —

I, too weak
To work with world's late power, have lain me here
'Mid earlier peoples and a morning faith
In every dawn's uprising: that with this
Mild, pitying image I may yet ignore
The pathos of the westering of the sun
Through thousand ages: that, by length at last
Of years, I be still watching when the dawn
Breaks of a new earth and returning day.

LOVE POEMS

THE NILE

“NOT with the tumult of a thousand tongues,
“O Nile, but silently with serious pace
“And sympathy a thousandfold for earth
“And men and for the misery of things!” —
So pray’d I. And old Nile unto my need
Hath made response. A thousandfold his flow
Enfolds me. In his broad beneficence
Seem suffering and misery foregone.

And thou, like Nile, not as I mourn’d thee late,
Movest : a quickening and fecundity
Unto my barren being. And in me
The glad seed blossoms ; and the land is green.

AN EGYPTIAN JOURNEY

LUXOR

I

LOVE, for, if all 'soever of the world
Must pass and yield place to the new that but
By ruin of things old and in their fall
Can build and flourish and be more than they
(Making the dead best live, that only slept
Till strength stirr'd o'er them) ; and these tottering
halls

Be now so tragic-splendid that the soul
Seems smother'd by their very dust : how vast
Must be the world built out of these, beyond
Conception of endurance, place or mass,
In time's unsculptured speech, those harmonies
Which live by motion, yea, by perishing :

LOVE POEMS

II

AND thus are everlasting ! If my love
Seem'd of such beauty that the whole heart faints
With memory of some entablature,
Some architrave or column crumbling down
Out of the reaches of an infinite air —
And earth is desolation : shall not I
Allow the working of my soul ; and build
As none have built before, not out of stone
But mutability, of birth-in-death
Absolved and reconciled — the absolute Art ? —
I know not. Only, now the breath comes blind
With dust and tears. For still something would bide.

AN EGYPTIAN JOURNEY

THE TWO COLOSSI OF AMENOPHIS AT THEBES

ONE had not sat and waited here so long
Alone. But, thus companion'd, it might be. —
When dusk had come and all the night was dark
And dreadful in its hoar decay ; and stars
Were dimly distant : then had one alone
Been fearful ; and the morning had not found
Him vast nor steadfast. But, with two to feel
A sympathy through earth's long night of things,
Dawn seem'd not doubtful. And when dawn at last
And sunsurge smote, yet no expected tone
Gave sonorous response : then had one brow
Melted. But two have still survived the shame.

LOVE POEMS

NIGHT ALONG THE RIVER

TALL palms athwart the lifting moon their plumes
Sweep as in pale procession ; and beyond
Gleams silver-gray the desert whose grim hills
Move ever stilly and with sheen of some
Broidery to the hem of Egypt's robe. —
A cere-cloth and a pitiable show
Of grandeur as the ruin'd tinsel round
Some stark sarcophagus ? Some corpse of love
Trick'd out in ornament to wear thy name
Yet crumble at the first lift of the lid
And fall to powder at a finger's stroke ?

Say, rather, fresh strength stirring : though one love.

AN EGYPTIAN JOURNEY

DAWN AT ASSOUAN

FOR is not Egypt wakening anew
Whilst none less Egypt ? If no longer dead
And buried 'neath the ruins of her strength
But builded o'er them otherwise than they,
Yet none less Nile's own nation stretch'd afield
Green to the sun and flourishing as when
'T was Pharaoh's granary ? — If recent hands
Would alter and by altering revive
The spent vitality, shall I then shrink
From any least enlightening, for the fear
Dawn were not thine : as day, night, both have been ?

Life, if but life, were Egypt's : more than death.

LOVE POEMS

PHILÆ

YEA, here is something of magnificence
Which hath been ; which shall never again be
As it hath been ; and which our very zeal
To foster and preserve hath made unworth
Men's admiration. Liefer, let it lie
Lovely beneath the fertilizing flood
A sacrifice to new civilities ;
Than worse than waste our labor, spoiling all
The beauty as the tragic offering,
The benefit and vicarage alike ! —

Were yet yon temple even I myself,
None other ; would I spurn thy fostering ?

AN EGYPTIAN JOURNEY

ABU SIMBEL

I

OUT of the sullen stone thou carvedst me
An heart, and madest it magnificent
With sculptured imagery, that all my walls
Had borne thy features. And beneath my roof
Even in the midst of me the vault was held,
Yea, by thy form and person splendidly
Hewn of my living substance. And my gates
Were guardian'd round by thee, thee mountain-huge
And heaven-like exalted, that the world
Of mountain and of heaven's high vault might know
Who builded him and who was this man's soul. —
Yet came the sand and choked all utterly.

LOVE POEMS

II

AND after may come searchers who have seen
Some crown obtruding or a sacred brow
Unburied by some chance swirl of the gale
And rearing marvelous, inexplicable
Out from the driven desertness and death
To mock with wonder. And perchance their toil
Shall find the splendor of thy person still,
Though worn and shatter'd with the centuries,
Sufficiently denoting what was once
Of vast religion and eternal faith.
And they shall see where the last line broke off.
And share thy cenotaph with bats and owls.

AN EGYPTIAN JOURNEY

KHARTOUM

AY, love, for what avails sincerity
If earth hath other truth none less sincere
Which, overpowerful, must twist and thwart
My singleness of purpose to some snarl
Of falsity ? That here a noblest life
Went down in darkness and distrust, but that,
With peace at heart, he held perforce a sword ;
With war in every purpose, yet pursued
Conciliation : such must give us pause !

What were my love when met with truth none less
Sincere of unlove, than a hate at heart ;
As hate profess'd, other than love for thee ?

LOVE POEMS

OMDURMAN

THUS in these uttermost antipodes
Hath throed and sprung through fiercest tragedy,
Through writhings of the heart implacable,
The new truth : how the final service God
Hath ask'd, were just — death ; though the world deny
And call religion madness. Should I hate
Hard as I love thee, be not much amazed
At the apostacy — 't were death to me !
Which thou, as now I understand thy will,
Demandest : leaving me to lie and bleach
Bone-white beneath the sun, scorch'd on this sand.

So in my desertness I still live love.

AN EGYPTIAN JOURNEY

THE DESCENT TO THE SEA

SO in my desertness I need thee still !

Though the white eastering waves shall pour and pour
Over and past and on beneath, whilst soul
And foresight, will and all intelligence
Are firm to the one purpose to resume
World's interrupted labor and defy
Their ruin that is in me — all is thou.
Thou, these gods' fall ; and thou, time's pulse and tread
That plants its onward foot upon their neck
League after league : and thou at last the goal
Of desperate persistence godlessly.

Egypt, mine Egypt, only hath been thou.

LOVE POEMS

EXODUS

“ THEREFORE, not thou canst cure me of myself,
“ Egypt ! scarce thou ; nor yet thy swarth Soudan
“ Beyond thee fervid, tragic equally !
“ Not hundred-hued sweet Thebes, with morning and
“ With evening in her temples and her fields,
“ Opal and emerald and gold, can free me.
“ And if not thou, great Egypt ! then what else
“ That earth hath of the living or the dead ?”

For I am not as I would other men
May be : full meekly to revere (nor crave)
Thy beauty and thy wonder and thy might.
I leave thee as I came. For I am I.

PALESTINE UNVISITED

PALESTINE UNVISITED

I

BECAUSE the vivid West with thy wan soul
Is bound and burden'd ; and the year of love
Is past with that short season of thy faith ;
And, though thou breath'st, yet that thou livest not
Save in an outward semblance : therefore toward
An East long dead and moveless, breathless, lost
Out of all motion of earth's outward year,
I with my faith, my soul, at latency
Yearn marvelously, ay, mysterious-wise :
Seeking some vital substance. Where the world
Hath been but is not, haply there the soul
Liveth ; and recompenseth living faith.

LOVE POEMS

II

WERE the hope wanton ?— I had thought to find,
Here where thy masterful rich womanhood
Dwelleth at compact with a world of power,
The absolute completion. When my love
And joy in thee made harmony of all ;
And strength seem'd autovital : then thought I :
Though earth might pass, fulfilling so earth's self
By death, yet faith that had upbuilt the world
Were everlasting : and our life therewith. —
Now shall I deem the syllogism strain'd ;
And love, as earth, fulfilling self by death ?
Or might I hope my love, love not enow ?

PALESTINE UNVISITED

III

THE worship had seem'd sacred utterly ;
The faith, redemption ; and the sacrifice,
Foreseen and almost as with fortitude
Accepted, seal'd or so had seem'd to seal
The consecration. And though earth were dead,
Dream'd I, religion, heart's criterion
Of life or death, were not a thing to die. —
Now were criterion of life or death
Itself death's subject ? Might oblivion
Lay hold on that intelligence wherethrough
Alone might any memory have end ?
Or were religion not of me and thee ?

LOVE POEMS

IV

OUR love had seem'd so much religion-like
That when the first inevitable loss
Of faith ensued upon the death of thine,
Then I with incommended subtlety
Deduced full analogue with love's old tale
Of One ; and of the endurance for awhile
Of faith in Him ; but now even as His world
Were dead in the East, so that the faith of Him
Had likewise perish'd. Thus I bitterly
Denied my better insight that had been ;
And yielded to an imagery obtain'd
Not of His message : but of earlier gods.

PALESTINE UNVISITED

V

FOR to a land of old fatuity ;
Of half-forgotten fetters ; of strange faiths
And mystic fantasies of monstrous forms
Half worse-than-human ; and of wrecks of these :
I fled ; where every feature of the earth
Might picture ruin as it was in me :
So to escape thy world, thy mockery
Of strength unquenchable. And there I found
A faith gone-under and an ancient soul
So dead 't was marvel it seem'd once alive.
And so I sought to feel the death of faith
An incident and instance of all things.

LOVE POEMS

VI

SOMEWHAT there was, I call'd in that dark hour
The spirit still of thee, that would not die.
Someway such antique land, though desert-dread
And worthless of a resurrection, told
Thy story over and over as I gazed.
I call'd it lingering faith within my dream
Of thee and came away with on my lips :
"Egypt, mine Egypt, only hath been thou" —
Blaspheming, as I know. Though thou wast dead
In me, there rose even from those soulless stones
A soul ; an insight of a valent faith
That was in them : for all its falsity.

PALESTINE UNVISITED

VII

A FAITH that so, despite its falsity
Of hewn enormities, of life trod down
To stifling in death's effort to endure
Without end by material monument,
Was infinite, forever working on
Into the living faiths that since have been ;
And ended not with crumbling of its tombs.
A faith that therefore and therein alone
Was somewhat still beyond my faith in thee
And buoy'd me up and led me on to know
There might be life without thee : not without
Divinity. Thou, not my soul, wast dead.

LOVE POEMS

VIII

AND thus that thou in soul and all with thee
Of thine onworking West are to my spirit
Dead ; and there lie beyond the morning lands
Of desolate stagnation : following on
The hint old Pharaoh's stagnancy hath given
I journey. And my journeying shall find
An holy place in desolation, though
Long desolate yet holy. And a faith
I once deem'd dead with its own sacrifice
Shall haply surge again. And in its life
Shall faith in thee, religion-wise, renew
The soul lost out of labor : and we live. —

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PALESTINE UNVISITED

IX

FOR nothing is there here that hath endured
Of tomb nor monument ; nor sought to stay.
If Egypt wastes her substance to endure
And deems destruction and the desperate change
A death, what hope were, in a world of change,
That Egypt, save in some vague grief alone,
Should be an influence to later years ?
What hope were, mine Egyptian, that thy change
Should seem in me less than an utter death
By desperate destruction ; thou alive
Save as renunciation ? — Someway here
The sacrifice seems consonant with strength.

LOVE POEMS

X

HERE is no effort against onwardness,
No hint of horror at self-sacrifice
Even to obliteration. Here the past
Lives by its willingness, yea, zest to move
Outward and still beyond, absorbing all
Of future wonder by desertion quite
Of first scenes and the primal face of faith.
Nay, hath the loss seem'd His but to those hearts
Which will not waken to wax onward still,
Which yearn at some stability untoward
Of creed and custom in our fluxioning :
Missing the self-stability of Him ?

PALESTINE UNVISITED

XI

FOR the world wakens in these latter days
As it hath waken'd alway ; and it seems
As though the wonder-workings of the age
Were incompatible with what hath been :
And Christ were grown archaic. And there bide
Reactionaries who with coward cant
Apologize for heaven and doubt the fact
Of earth ; contending 'gainst the crude half-cult
Of earth-for-earth-alone. But there are ways
Beyond the ken of either disputant
To reconcile antinomies : denying
Nought save their need that truth be dual-whole.

LOVE POEMS

XII

AY, we have fought, we even Christ's followers,
Through darken'd ages of a dual truth :
One law for earth that leaveth Christ behind
And one for Christ His kingdom altering not
Nor suffering adaptation. But we miss
Still the true view by few if fit attain'd :
How, by the absolute relinquishment
Of every creed and tenet to receive
Each fragment of the new-won basketful,
Thereby and thus alone the scrap becomes
Full feast and faith is science-justified.
Here, love, if love be, shall the faith be won.

PALESTINE UNVISITED

XIII

WHAT merit in denying that we know
For sake of somewhat which, as truths now prove,
We know in error ? Why pretend our place
Of Palestine were earthly Paradise,
And Christ the God-on-earth seen yesterday ?
Why pretend that my faith in thee now past
Endureth ? — Yet there 's somewhat in the passing
Of faith, of Christhood, of an holy place
Which waxeth aye ! How were a present age
Itself and present ; how were any truth
Self-comparable with error : could the world
“ Be as though yesterday had never been ” ?

LOVE POEMS

XIV

THEREFORE assume through every change of truth
The viewpoint, not of him that must deny,
But of the faith for which denial stands.
Therefore abjure not of a God-on-earth
Nor holiness in mere geodesy,
Till that for once we have assumed the place
Of Christhood in ourselves ; and, being assured,
Ay, of the fact that faith in Self hath been,
Discern what 's presupposed unto all time —
Now, as to past — by virtue of that Now
Which is of all-time ; what 's supposed of truth
Even by denial, yea, by “ love pass'd-by ”.

PALESTINE UNVISITED

XV

FOR we may err by too close subtlety
Of literal analysis, may find
I never loved : because the love I now
Conceive, interpret and would seek expound
Shows loftier with a novel synthesis.
Yet were the virtue of the new conceit
Mere affectation were it not attain'd
Through " writhings of the spirit implacable ".
Our science-world were wanton as the Greek
Had we not come through ages iron-bound
Of Schoolmen torturing to the last resort
The logic antedating their own Christ.

LOVE POEMS

XVI

THE logic therefore failing before Him.
If by too wide reaction men have swerved
On one hand to denying any rule
Of reasoning and maintain in face of facts
Empirical continuance of His word ;
Or counterfalsely deem the lore of facts
Sufficient to intelligence nor heed
Warning of what a will accomplishes :
Error and counter-error were not His.
His was a feeling for the faith in facts,
The fact of faith. — Shall a new logic-law
Interpret what love spake in parable ?

PALESTINE UNVISITED

XVII

BUT someway we imagine still, with lore
Of ancient Aristotle platonizing,
How either were each item isolate
And self atomic, else the actual flux
From item unto item finds its stand
In superimposed conservatism of type ;
Self still atomic save as generalized
And merged. We deem our Christ, our love, our faith
Rather a passing point illuminate
Somewise by some unaltering source of sight
Nowise within us save as each were all :
I, thou but by commingling in desire.

LOVE POEMS

XVIII

NOW that communion is an unreal aim,
Even as Christ a man who truly died ;
And that there is no fact throughout all earth
Indifferently another nor facts all
By any subterfuge : hath love an end ?
Hath Christ as Christ ceased to have been Himself ?—
Lurks there one truth in all our waste of facts
Half-realized, it were : that the fact not-now,
If utterly distinctively at end
And nevermore to be confused with fact
Of any present, thus imperishably
Lives in the life its death serves to define.

PALESTINE UNVISITED

XIX

THE world 's alive but with the paradox
Of multiple identity conserved
Even by the passing and the change from it.
Self were not one ; nor any truth of fact
Were estimable : save the world beyond
By no confusion nor no merging with it,
But by inexorable otherness
Through every alteration, still defined
The alterative entity as whole.
Such for our insight of these latter days
Half-utter'd, half-foreshadow'd. — Not some Love,
But my lost love lives in denying it.

LOVE POEMS

XX

LOVE, mark the revolution. Science sneers :
“The isolation is a given surd.
“How, what the resolution, save by type,
“We care not.” And the churches stupidly
Retort : “Eternal verity is one.
“We see not any seeming paradox
“To solve.” So each in some agnosticism
Evades the opportunity. Christ said :
“I, who am I and thus no other man,
“Imply men all ; that they are whole by me.”
But neither of our wisdoms speaks as His ;
For both are scribes without authority.

PALESTINE UNVISITED

XXI

RECORDERS both : that from fresh tablets-trove ;
This, of old oracle ! — yea, neither clark
Self-utterance attaining. And the screed,
Their record of earth-nature as of God,
Hath need of author. But one scribe hath fail'd
To foist upon the earth an arbiter ;
And one discredits thought's necessity :
Mis-reasoning of a world which point by point
Conceiveth of itself in every point
Self-revelation. — Shall we but record,
Copyists merely ; or, by utterance
Original, reconcile self and world ?

LOVE POEMS

XXII

AND note the blindness. As I pray'd and yearn'd :
"Thou shall I be : and thou shalt be my peace !" —
So scoff they both ; the church, the science each
Predicting absolution : that, "In God" ;
This, "In the void of cosmic negligence".
It matters little ; for the goal were nought,
The satisfaction of amalgamance
A self-destruction. He had better sight :
"Because of this my separateness unique,
"Define I all ; am therefore whole by them." —
How have men shrunk from self-interpreting
The utterance ! How, wanted to be One !

PALESTINE UNVISITED

XXIII

THIS then is love : to stand beside the world
A selfhood segregate ; and, thus because
A thing unique, not substituting for
Some joy or pain of any, therefore whole —
Not part of any though defining each —
A joy, a pain conclusive of theirs all ;
A sacrifice beyond vicarious
Atonement, self-creating a world lost
To learn and thus to save it : in oneself
To prove divinity to every time.
And therefore were the cosmos or the God
Vacant alike in their fatuity.

LOVE POEMS

XXIV

SUCH the first step, love, in reconstituting
The vividness of Christ as of my love.
To take upon me, as the sins of the world
Even for redemption by acknowledgment,
The virtue of the loss, the passing-by
Of Christ's own story, of thy woman's faith
(If faith) ; denying nowise of the world
The absoluteness of the death of it,
Nor value of death's subject. So I turn
My soul to feel the vividness of His
Long-past atonement ; fill my heart with it
As not-mine : and redeem thereby my world.

PALESTINE UNVISITED

XXV

BUT no solipsism, no declaring self
Alive with love that hath no other-self ;
No personal divinity without
The worth of a world created and maintain'd
In work ! And therefore with the hope to prove
Thee vivid and the speech made half-divine
As not since Egypt and a faith disrupt,
I hitherward have turn'd ; avowing all
The passing desolation ; yet in change,
The desertness and insignificance
Of this waste country, claiming for the Christ
Fulfilment of a world-divinity.

LOVE POEMS

XXVI

AS Christ conceived it, palpably the faith
Was parable, no clear-cut logic-term
Defining beyond cavil ? Yet I think
The phrase was for the world, as this for thee ;
And fitted not too closely to a truth
Of individual divinity
The world had misinterpreted straightway !
Howbeit, such the truth I take of Him,
And such the resolution : to obtain
Ability to work in and for thee
By virtue of the passing of my faith
And passing of faith's longing to endure.

PALESTINE UNVISITED

XXVII

NO mergence, no community ; save as
The love-totality of faith in self
To reinterpret and to save a world
Touches thee and is touchstone of thine own.
No isolation as in latter days,
More than the mergence of that past desire ;
But definition of thy vivid soul
Not dead, by reference through every act
To thine activity. That so thy West
Of onward-working proves compatible
With life in the spirit : and the world is well.
No Palestinian wanness : save renew'd.

LOVE POEMS

XXVIII

THE world works on. We are not left behind
Like Egypt, like the love of yesterday
Nor that false phantom of the shallow creeds
Who died "but to endure". For we endure
Even by entering in and working through
New tragedies, new desperateness day
By day, with fresh assurance of a will
To feel an universe and, feeling earth,
Earn wholeness in the unique estimate
Soul puts upon it as soul's act of faith.
This be the meaning of mine estimate
Created in me of an East now dead.

PALESTINE UNVISITED

XXIX

DID not I write, then when our faith was new
And love was victory, and Christ did live,
And life was as religion ; sang I not
“ Belovèd, and Mary meets thee on the hills ” ?
How otherwise the world ! And through what toils
Of counter-dispensation are we come :
In image of this tale and tragedy
Of Christendom ! But now the phrase anew
Hath meaning. Mary greets thee as her Son
Not living, nay, nor dead ; but risen from
The sepulchre of ages when the world
Look'd to His second coming : unaware.

A MOURNING FOR DEATH

A MOURNING FOR DEATH

I

I SANG ; when last the chill frost overlaid
All passionate earth, and forest fastnesses
Were steel-stiff, and the world's rigidity
Wrought in me ; then I sang, as one o'erlaid
With sepulchring white snow and stiffen'd as
The forest-iron beyond sufferance :
Awaiting then a springtime and a sun
Which, surging, show'd my seeds a barrenness ;
Proved death — the death of him adored as thou —
For truth of earth's return to quickening.
And thou wast so estranged I deem'd thee dead
Though near me. — Now these songs I send afar. —

LOVE POEMS

II

BELOVÈD, I could not latterly abide
Earth's two-fold tragedy. Bereavement seem'd
Too utterly, intolerably the truth
Of every feature of my soul and world !
Wherefore, since he was not attainable
Who in default of any fathering God
Had been eternal Father unto me,
To thee I turn'd — pardon the hope forlorn ! —
Who wert attainable : and found my dead
In so far forth as thou wast of the dead
Alive as formerly. And now I bear
Only the death and suffering of him.

A MOURNING FOR DEATH

III

'T WERE still a grief sufficient to a soul,
Amplly intolerable : as my breath
Bore witness when it fail'd then at the first ;
But now relieved, enlighten'd by the life
Thy soul's resuscitation showeth me. —
I cannot pander to the creeds profess'd
Of faith in future resurrection known
For fact impossible. I cannot lie
In face of truth and try pretend belief
In any mere continuance of his spirit
Now nor at any moment after death
Hath been. But I may learn of life through thee.

LOVE POEMS

IV

FOR first let me accept the fact of death
Such as it still most surely seems to be :
That now he is not anywhere about,
Dwelling nor being with me ; but that somewhat
Which once was he though now is nowise of him
Lies somewhere placed apart, haply lest we
Might ever know and craze our hearts with it.
'T were sweeter to consign unto the fire
Of purification such sad carrion.
But, as the fact is, this I know of death
In plain recital. — I had thought of thee
Not as the same : though parted as by death.

A MOURNING FOR DEATH

V

AND therein, by the seeming severance
Unalterable and intolerable,
Had lain the application unto thee
Of death's, which buried as the dead thy name.
And now I learn the seeming severance
Yet revocable ; and the parallel
A falsifying of the fact of thee.
And thou wilt be about, and share my store
Of casual converse ; that we meet and part
To meet again : so wholly unlike death.
And only somewhat not felt of the dead
Debars from fullest life, suggests death still.

LOVE POEMS

VI

THAT somewhat wanting to our fullest life
I need not tell thee now nor make my prayer.
I wait thee : as I could not wait the dead
Who change not, wax not as thy soul shall grow.
I pass the poor complaint and take of thee
With infinite exaltation that thou givest —
The opportunity to do thee praise
In speech and upright living by thy grace
Unto the end (may I not fall from thee !).
The possibility to purge my soul
Of its untoward rebellion, facing death
And finding in it this, yet lack'd of thee.

A MOURNING FOR DEATH

VII

AND finding, in bereavement which abides,
Life's very fulness which thy life suggests
As formerly, though even as latterly
Denies as from some sepulchre. For, whilst
By lovelessness in thee I held thee dead,
How might my spirit in the fact of death
Detect establishment of deathless love ?
But, now thou art alive as formerly
(No dream of death), thus even thy lovelessness
Relieves death of the burthen ; leaveth love
Rejoicing in its dead as not in life :
Raiseth the dead to life unendingly.

LOVE POEMS

VIII

FOR now I mind me of the facts of death
With new interpretation : how these years
Of dispossession and of desolateness
Are not the years of him who lieth dead.
Are not the hours of him ; who last did live
With very love of me upon his lips ;
For whom no æons of a loneliness
Weaken one worth of that companionship
Which fill'd and held — not (as I feel) his last,
But — his eternally fulfilling days
Of soulship and of worldhood. For the Now
Of Self may cease not : though it be not now.

A MOURNING FOR DEATH

IX

THUS by the grace of thy resuscitance
And by the gratitude I owe to thee
Abides the presence and the life of him
Even in the wisdom now at length vouchsafed.
Him have I with me as I held him then
Beyond the power of any death to take,
His love and his death equally alive :
A source of strength and insight as of joy
Through all-time, solace of the lonely years.
And when at last thy love affordeth me
Fulness of life, shall any love be lost
Because death also hath its victories ?

LOVE POEMS

X

BELOVÈD, for the lovelessness of thee,
Though teaching love's affinity to death,
Involves no implication that our life
Is life the more by seeming lack of love.
Nay, rather, if thy least resuscitance
Hath power to prove love deepliest for the truth
Of that which otherwise were emptiness
(Turning the void to some fulfilment still)
How mightily by this am I confirm'd
In primal faith : how, bringing to thee all
That life or death alike in me provide,
I meet in thee the world that was my soul !

A MOURNING FOR DEATH

XI

WHEREFORE is no bereavement recently.
Wherefore is every blustering of this bleak
And savage season an assurance (through
The opportunity to combat strength
With strength, to enter in and be as one
With these wild boreal tempests) an assurance
Of reciprocity in strength with thee,
Prophecy of thy soul's upsurging spring
To reconcile and quicken when thou comest.
Therefore I send unto thy living heart
These seeds from out my love-fill'd sepulchre
Not barren, nay, nor sleeping : only, dead.

A JOURNEY FROM OCEAN TO OCEAN

A JOURNEY FROM OCEAN TO OCEAN

I

BENEATH these swales of white forgetfulness
In blank monotony yet beautiful
(Wherethrough my spirit passes that it sing)
Lieth another beauty not of them
Save in its breadth monotonous of harsh
Insistent savagery. These wastes of schist
Half-cover'd crystal clean must here and yon
Still thrust to outcrop where the storm was wild
That overlaid them, and the grief severe
That tortured them to their rough imagery
Of tragic waters in unceasing pain.
These stones oppress me still for all their snow.

The Lofty
Bad-Lands

LOVE POEMS

II

The East in
Retrospect

FOR I have been a dweller by that sea
Whose wintry breath is as a flail of frost
To beat upon the body and the soul
Of him who breatheth it. And all its strength
Is leaden, burdening the heart of him
To desperation who doth strive thereby
And take unto himself the shock and roar
Which poureth from it. Such the Atlantic is
And such am I, even as the spume-scour'd rock
That shuddering seethes to sanded nothingness. —
Thou being as ocean, I must put between
A continent to dare behold the sea.

A JOURNEY FROM OCEAN TO OCEAN

III

IT were not I would wilfully neglect
Thee and thy truth's inexorability ;
Nor wholly that thy truth imposed through mine
Is tyranny beyond my power to bear.
But empty art thou of the life my soul
Must live if anywise be life to me :
That with some pitiful pretence of life
(Love's multitudinous delight in earth)
Forbidden to my spirit must I my sight
Delude and cheat with shows of passing things.
The panorama of thine ocean spread
Did lead me desertward but yesteryear.

The Journey's
Warrant

LOVE POEMS

IV

The Undertaking

AND desertward maybe lead me once more
These oceanic billowings of scene
Even as formerly. And I yet sick
Return to take my mockery of life
Once again unto me : and be as now.
But, though the worst be, no oblivion
Can cure the sickness that the spirit knows.
Therefore be unforgot beneath this shroud
The desolation and the fruitlessness
Which soul can garner but by soul alone
In intimate possession : yea, the death
Forever in me though I live — as thou !

A JOURNEY FROM OCEAN TO OCEAN

V

AY, between thee and that far shore of strength
Whereto my journey beareth stretch wide sands
Unshrouded, naked of a covering scar
Where loss and isolation alone bide
Sublime by self-acknowledgment. And there
Shall snow be seen a source of cosmic fact,
An implication of the grief below ;
No lethe, but sealing at worst earth's cirque,
Rendering self-sufficient unto earth
Each place of earth's purgation. In such art
As nature makes of aimlessness beyond
Self-imposed process shall the sight take truth.

The Desert in
Expectation

LOVE POEMS

VI

The Continen-
tal Parting of
the Ways

AND by that truth sense soul's new wakening.
For even now the rivers of the east
No longer turn their slow streams unto thee.
But here be torrents which in some serene
Southwestward ocean after tortuous course
Shall find completion and a quick rebirth.
Though fires had barr'd them yet a mightiest gorge
Is of their rupturing and their route their own.
Like to those waters now released from thee,
Descending from the hills I find outspread
Still but an image of my nakedness.
And lesser waters all are lost in it.

A JOURNEY FROM OCEAN TO OCEAN

VII

HERE is that vast plain wherearound my soul
Rears passionately towering, shuddering from
Its acrid desolation. Cities stand
About the outskirts of its desertness
Fair at my feet ; but all its pasturage
Is penance and the heart of it is full
Of sourest brine causing, not quenching, thirst.
From every altitude that is my soul
Ice as the sweat of my stark agony
Sweeps down to mingle with that bitterness.
That wide wan mockery my soul surrounds
Wholly : no drop shall ever reach a sea.

The Great Salt
Basin

LOVE POEMS

VIII

Its Geodetic
Destiny

YET but that very bitterness of death,
This dreg-remains of my dread sacrament,
Is proof of intimate process where my soul
Hath purge if drop by drop and sweat by sweat
Of somewhat which must yet be purged of me.
Haply in course of ages even my snow,
My crown of still attempting the great truth,
Shall melt from my diminishment and then
Only deintegration tell that once
Was something that aspired : and I attain
By surcease of the struggle ; yea, liberate
These waters as I wholly die with them.

A JOURNEY FROM OCEAN TO OCEAN

IX

THOUGH there be some who with a patient thrift
(Those citizens whose labor looks so fair)
Are husbandmen of these my frost-fed streams
To turn into a garden each his place
With daily watering : and thus my tears
Are taught some present purpose. But at last
Must the flow foul and dwindle and those few
Who trust the hills about them be betray'd. —
Still is there one who as mine head sinks low
And lower saith : “ What fume the sun sucks up
Collected of thy chrism shall more and more
Pass o'er thee and its longing be appeased.”

And also its
Mystery

LOVE POEMS

X

And Desire

I DOUBT me not that when these hills were new
They were as I, creatures who took their care
Of this life-chance within them for some space
To further, by experience of light
And air, the natural increase of faith
Under the sun. And as the heart within
Their early-aging circumspect grew stale
No adventitious outlet to their orb
Relieved the self-suffusion. As my soul
Became they this intensive tragedy
Indifferent to earth's life beyond their death.
But in this hope of death become they whole.

A JOURNEY FROM OCEAN TO OCEAN

XI

AN hope of death here seemingly achieved
By every sign of charnel-bleaching earth.
A corpse below and in the sky above
The piercing poison that put out its life
By too much passion, not enough of peace.
This then is peace, the hope and help held out
Of modern insight, of all earth to-day
As man would make it. — Is no earth of God
Discoverable, shall no ocean be
Salvation whence we come and whither go ?
Behold a beauty to itself alone :
'T were somewhat. Is there anything beyond?

The American
Desert

LOVE POEMS

XII

Its Fact of
Failure

PERCHANCE where southward far that stream pursues
Its wonderwork amid the insensate stones
(That stream whereof the power is all its own
And springeth from the source and is not fed
By any other streams save streams as strong
To sculpture out a world as is itself :
Not by the world about it !), there perchance
Were somewhat nobler, richer than the dream
Of oceanic mingled mystery. —
I wot not yet. The desert here doth cry
For ocean and shall not be satisfied.
Desiring bread hath earth brought forth a stone.

A JOURNEY FROM OCEAN TO OCEAN

XIII

And Mystical
Redemption

ASSUREDLY not in a desert death
Is read the lesson of the life of things.
If seemingly a circuit closed and done,
Without resumption, yet suggestive still
Of yearning toward an ocean but beyond.
And if the destitution be aware
By self-acknowledgment (as, save self-shamed,
Were desertness a fair fertility)
Must ocean be concluded of these stones
In sensible presence ; and yon barriers
That westward rear nigh insurmountable
Inspire but soul's best effort to surpass.

LOVE POEMS

XIV

The Snowy
Range

LO ! for the conquest shall exhibit fields
Of full fertility for patent fact ;
The weathering of the cycle of the streams
For absolution : if mysterious still
By abnegation, yet by rich access
Of multitudinous fecundity
Thereby proved universal every stone ;
And desertness no limitation but
Some end and aim in virtue of itself. —
Thus in the paths of earlier conquerors
To force the achievement and be free at last
Of the immediate system of the sea !

A JOURNEY FROM OCEAN TO OCEAN

XV

ALL earth would sing. — But there is much of blame
To pardon in those earlier conquerors
Ere paradise be wholly here approved.
Blood-stains of conquest, rage to rifle earth
Of earth's worst bane or bounty, scoring all
With plague-pits of past desertness anew.
Nor hath men's exploitation of the fields
Been pure of tyranny and toils of shame.
The grief is here which ever bides with men
Of concupiscence. May the unlusting hills
Which hymn the high Pacific yet teach men's hearts
The harvesting and garnering of soul.

The Central
Californian
Valleys

LOVE POEMS

XVI

The Country
of the Spanish
Fathers

BEHOLD, for there hath been a chronicle
Of loftiest effort after singleness
Of spirit to the benefit of men
By stern self-abnegation. And the tale
Soothes the vex'd soul in its contemplating.
In that old history the earth and air,
The hills and the quick streams do all conspire
With ocean to the consecrating of
The human purpose and are proof of it.
The sense of desolation as of thee
Is lifted from my spirit ; as thus I take
Religion of the loss, learn'd of these hills.

A JOURNEY FROM OCEAN TO OCEAN

XVII

HERE was the spirit of the conquerors
Not too much stain'd with conquest. Here that rage
To ransack earth seized not upon men's souls.
Nor modernly hath stark oppression mark'd
The working of new highways to the world :
As where with wheat are flesh and blood thresh'd out
To glut the seven-fold monster. But these vales
Harbor their people ; with the sea before,
The serious hills behind to be their hearth
And heaven to roof them. While above their fields
Stand towers, not towers of conquest, but the home
Of harvesters and vineyarders of men.

Their Fair
South Coast

LOVE POEMS

XVIII

Its Missions

FOR pious priests have toil'd along this land
With book and bell, with solemn forest-cross
To yield salvation ; and have suffer'd some
Their crowning martyrdom ; and some have pass'd
Full of the ripe years laden low with souls.
And there be those who still at cheerful tilth
Bear the brown robe and greet their ground with
prayer.

A creed is in these mountains ; and along
This shore lies wondering many a mystic isle
Where fragments of the hills, having stepp'd down,
Receive a baptism each of its own cloud
Uppgather'd and descending as a dove.

A JOURNEY FROM OCEAN TO OCEAN

XIX

DAY by day, yea, along this sun-steep'd coast
As over every isle of omen'd blue
Riseth the sea-wind softly and upon
The flanks and features of these hills uncouth
Maketh a cloud to crown and cover them.
The brute-like breast, the gaunt, bough-bearing brow
That unregenerate rear unashamed
At heaven, lie hooded and their ridge engown'd.
And o'er their limbs these peaks initiate
Receive the oil and ichor coursing down
In sacramental secrecy to brim
The one wide holy basin bathing all.

And its
Mountains

LOVE POEMS

XX

The Mountains'
Metaphor

I HAVE ascended as these rains descend
To feel the absolution : and have seen. —
The flood beneath that by infiniteness
Symbols the wholeness of the acknowledged soul ;
Ocean beneath in far tranquillity.
And neighboring the strand those emerald swales
Which are the first and best of human works,
Field-gardens in their young fecundity.
And, round about me, strugglings as of some
Effort to lift as earth shall lift no more.
But over all, brooding and crowning near,
That consolation cloud-born of the sea.

A JOURNEY FROM OCEAN TO OCEAN

XXI

THUS, thus shall all earth's struggling then attain, *And its Interpretation*
By consecration to the accepted cup.
Thus soul's deintegration (felt and fear'd
In former song and by that earlier song
As death accepted) were shown sacred yet. —
The rains descend. I as those barren buttes
Of yesterday am wash'd into the sand
A desertness ; but as these hills to-day
Should take some splendor by the tragic truth,
Some sense of self-repletion. " From the sea,
" So back unto the sea " : were void ; save for
Such storm-hewn steeps to shrink and suffer still.

LOVE POEMS

XXII

Their Time of
Emptiness

A SEASON cometh in each rounded year
When clouds are wanting and the relentless sky
Sucks up no moisture save from earth alone.
The vineyards wither and the fields of tilth
Are shrivell'd every one unto a scar
To tell of passions, burnings that have been
But are not in those days of afterdeath.
Myself was but some scar of afterdeath,
Some cicatrice where passion onetime was ;
But as the reawakening of these hills
To cloud-crown'd tragedy I too shall grow
Couraged to suffer comprehendingly.

A JOURNEY FROM OCEAN TO OCEAN

XXIII

Their Peace

THE barren spirit of the conquerors
Perchance was in me — them whose only aim
Was fierce possession. Surely was I one
Who fain had ransack'd earth and heaven to know
The treasure of thine heart nor leave it whole.
Oppression was there, mine own bone and blood
Forced to the wine-press to be worthier thee
By unremittent labor. Even have I
Fled from an ocean, from thine absoluteness
To save a self. — But now these wrongs are past.
I pray by the Pacific and serve his flood
With offering of my song drawn of his streams.

LOVE POEMS

XXIV

The Same

YEARS may return when yet myself a flood,
Fill'd with the strange swift strength of serving thee
(Though nowise merged sea-wasted in thy soul),
Shall hew awide, as almost erst, a course
Through desertness indifferent : we being thus
Creative-sculpturing as that rich stream
Southwestwardly wreaking on self surprised
Its powerful purpose to be perfect god.
Time was when prospect of such power of heart
Had seem'd a peace passing this present peace
Less nobly vouchsafed. But herein I hymn
Content this dream that passeth only death.

A JOURNEY FROM OCEAN TO OCEAN

XXV

NEVER anew the fear, the dread fatigue
Of meeting thee upon that marge of self
Where land and life with agony have end.
Never anew absorption 'neath thy deeps.
But acclamation of the private loss
(Thus absolute, conclusive of thy truth !)
Unending in this difference of heart
'Twixt earth and flood, my sufferance and thee.
Thy surge descends, thy strong denial thrills
The storm-wrought stone, the strain'd experience
That rears at outlook o'er thine infinite.
I rise new-bathed, a continent, from thee.

And Again
The Same

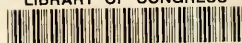
THE END

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